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431 some day reciprocate and the old man again 'thanks' him with beer given in his honour. And this is an essential aspect of these *gift* exchanges. The most striking illustration is in respect of *munyualo* (bride-price). The *tuzi*, it is said, never completes *munyualo* payments (*munyualo a u ftle*); even in his old age he must still respond to the call for assistance from his relatives-in-law; and they in turn never cease bringing him beer. But whatever he gives falls into the *munyualo* and must be returned should the marriage be dissolved; the chain linking the parties into relations of reciprocity has snapped.

574 535 471 The *gisha*, essentially a dance performed by the young men of one or more areas, provides the setting of an interesting interchange of goodwill and of commodities. The main object is undoubtedly recreational, and the main participators are not kin, but members of a territorial unit. The district head is not necessarily involved, except as far as he must know what goes on in his district. The old Lovedu word *lutbo*, a musical [54] entertainment, emphasizes its salient features: youths, blowing on reed flutes, dance round in a circle to the accompaniment of four drums beaten by girls. There is much preliminary practising under the leadership of the dance-master (*malogwani*), but in the actual performances leadership is not marked and changes continually as one performer after the other takes his stand in the centre of the ring of dancers. The artistic aspect, the making of the sets of reeds, their tone compass, the rhythmic counterpoints and the various melodic and harmonic sequences of sound may be dismissed in a sentence: close by, one is reminded of the pealing of bells thrown into ever new combinations by complex steps and movements; at a distance one listens as if to an *ensemble* of brass instruments strongly supported by drums. We are concerned with the socio-economic aspects only.

171 A slight comparison with the Venda *matangwa*, a word also used by the Lovedu (*matagwa*), is instructive. A Venda creditor wishing to collect a debt calls the dancers, gives them some work (such as the building of a hut or the repairing of a fence), and sends them to the recalcitrant debtor. There they stay feeding at the expense of the debtor and of his neighbours until the debtor pays. But the beast that the debtor pays is slaughtered and consumed by the performers, the creditor receiving only a small part. Apart from using the *matangwa* to enforce payment by debtors, the Venda also send such dancers to express sympathy when there has been a death and in that case there is a return visit to get back the beast slaughtered. It has also other uses not relevant to our present purpose.

574 535 431 Among the Lovedu the *gisha* is somewhat different. Private individuals send it to friends or relatives to express sympathy or to notify a death as well as to celebrate the occasion of the latter's marriage or setting up a new home; and there are special rules for each kind of *gisha*. The *gisha* of condolence, for instance, lasts one day, drums are not allowed if the deceased is of a foreign tribe, and refusal of the entertainment is impossible. Generally speaking, a *gisha* entails special food and lodging arrangements, food for the visitors being collected from households in the district which also provides sleeping quarters. The old rules designed

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CHAPTER VIII

FERTILITY AND THE DRUM CULT

The setting of the sacred drums in a mystical cult—initiation into the secrets of the whistling ancestors—calendric observances connected with fecundity, masks, and mummeries.

794 BESIDES the girls' puberty ceremony and the circumcision of boys, there are other initiation ceremonies among the Lovedu. One is the *vyali* (often looked upon as the women's counterpart of circumcision because of its regimentation), contemporaneous with which is the boys' *vuhwera*, consisting largely of masked dancing; another is the *gomana* for men. These are closely interwoven with a fertility and rain cult which, because of its association with sacred drums, one may call the drum cult. Their educational object, never very strongly marked in Bantu initiation schools, pales into insignificance before the ceremonial. Indeed the *gomana* as a 'school' is only an aspect of *gomana* ceremonial as a whole, the primary function of which is to secu · rain. The *vyali-vuhwera-gomana* complex is characterized by esoteric masks, mummeries, and mysteries and by a category of values which we may term the 'mystical philosophy' of the Lovedu. We shall give merely a brief picture of the complex, because, at the time of writing, the first *vyali-vuhwera* held for thirty-five years is still in progress and our ideas as to its true meaning are far from being settled.

794 The sacred drum cult has many ramifications. The *zwidjajani*, sup-
796 posed to be ancestral spirits coming to earth to take part in *gomana* singing and drumming of the sacred drums, have become incorporated into other aspects of the culture. They appear in the bush near the village whenever a harvest offering has been made in the families of royal relatives; they come at the installation of a new district head and at the [533] death of close relatives of the queen. On these occasions they join in the singing and dancing of *lesugu* songs, songs associated with the *vyali* of men and which, in addition to the above-mentioned occasions, are employed also when women dance for rain. The type of instrument by [776] means of which the *zwidjajani* whistle or bleat out their songs and messages is used also by the Bird, the ruling spirit of the *vyali*.

●534 Drums are much used in Lovedu life; they are played in the *gɔsha*
778 dance to the accompaniment of reed pipes, they are important in all initiations except circumcision, they are beaten for days at the dancing of possessed people, and it is significant that the public recognition by the queen of a new district head at his installation consists in the handing over of a drumstick (*khiɔba kha gɔma*). Drums are of two types: the long cylindrical drum played with the hands as it lies on its side and the *gɔma*, a rounded drum with handles, played by means of a drumstick as it stands in an upright position. The sacred drums (*digomana*) of the tribe are of the *gɔma* type, but, unlike ordinary *gɔma* drums, are played by hand, not with a drumstick. They are four in number, each with its special

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name, and are kept at present in a village beside the bush in which the last three rulers lie buried. Their keeper is a descendant of Malegudu, eldest son of Mugɔdɔ, who fought with Mujaji for the throne. These drums are not to be seen by the public, nor are people, except inmates of the royal district, supposed to pass anywhere near there. In appearance and decoration they are no different from ordinary drums, but they are made in a special way and it is said that the maker 'will see them with his eyes but never hear them with his ears' (i.e. he will be put to death when his work is done). The largest is *phaṭaṭɛ*, which stands about 4 ft. high; next in size is *ʈaŋga*; then comes *pekahare*; while the smallest and most important of all is *raŋwedi*, to which is attributed powers even of locomotion, because in 1892, when Albasini set fire to the royal village, it was the only one of the *gomana* drums that was not burnt. While all four *gomana* drums are said to contain a human skull instead of the stone that one usually finds inside it, *raŋwedi*, the smallest, has the facial skin of a human being placed (in strips, it is said) under the resonator of ox hide and has, smeared on the outside, the body dirt of the person (said to be always a chief councillor or other important person of royal blood) killed for its manufacture. This drum is thought to be closely associated with the welfare of the tribe. Should the chief have occasion to escape from enemies, she should take with her this drum, and it is said that, when the heir to the throne receives instruction in the use of rain medicines just prior to the death of the ruling chief, she must be sitting upon it. In some of the neighbouring tribes the sacred drums are pierced on the death of the chief.

The care of these sacred drums, involving periodic smearing with fat and ochre to keep out weevils and moths, renewal of the skin resonators, building and repair of the hut in which they are kept, is the work of a special section of people, those of Ravothata, whose totem is *ɖou* of Vulɛbye. Vulɛbye is in Phalaborwa, where this drum cult is much stronger than among the Lovedu. These Ravothata are also responsible for closing the *vyali* initiation at the capital when they come at its end with their weird-costumed dancing performers, the *magɔgɔbya*. Thus once again the *gomana* and the *vyali-vuhwera* are linked into a common complex. The sacred drums, played only on special ceremonial occasions and by men, not women, who are usually responsible for drumming, are looked upon as gods (*vɛdimo*). The praise of *phaṭaṭɛ*, the largest, is 'Leg of *phaṭaṭɛ* of Muhale [the old chief]; if it is not a god we can throw it away rattling to the pool' (*Goto la phaṭaṭɛ a Muhale hɛ ŋga ve a se mudimo re ga laṭa re khogolosa ra isa madivemi*). The Thavina and Nareni, tribes to the south of the Lovedu, offer to the sacred drums the first-fruits, and everywhere their beating is associated with rain and the agricultural year. Not only are the drums gods, but their sound is thought to be very pleasing to the *ʂwiɖajani*, those ancestral spirits who, when the drums are sounded, come and sing and dance. The knowledge that their part is played by initiated men does not appear to detract from their importance in the eyes of those who are in the secret. The instrument used consisted in the old days of the tibia of a human being with a feather inserted (and there is reason to believe that some of these are still extant) but to-day

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they use mostly two pieces of wood slightly concave on the inside in which a piece of sinew or reed is temporarily inserted. The language being tone-bound, messages and songs can be understood when whistled. Not all ancestral spirits, but only those of the Lovedu proper and of some of the important groups, such as the Khaha and Narem, are thought to be able to visit the earth as *zwidjani*.

The most important feature of the drum cult was the beating of the sacred drums in an enclosure near the village, usually in the afternoon and evening on six successive days twice every year: in the spring just before the sowing and in winter after the harvest thanksgiving. The spring drumming was preceded by propitiation of the royal ancestors by means of a libation on their graves in Ḓaja Forest, where the earlier chiefs lie buried. There was a special procession which no one was to see on pain of death, the Mulodozi River had to be crossed at a special spot called *Khitaba-vakolobi* (washing place of great people) and it is maintained by some that a black ox was also slaughtered. The district head at Ḓaja, who was responsible for clearing a way to the graves, had to plant near the royal graves a little of every seed cultivated. The people would then see, it is said, which grew best and would plant much of that. The *gomana*, the beating of the sacred drums, 'was the chief thing that had the power of asking rain from the ancestors'. The sounding of the drums at harvest-time was a thanksgiving. The first harvest *gomana* after the circumcision took the form of an initiation, in which the neophytes were introduced into the drum ritual and the secret of *zwidjani*, and received cuts on their faces as a sign that they had passed through it.

Though the sacred drums are still kept and the Ravothata people are still called to repair the hut in which they are placed, the regular beating of *gomana* drums has fallen into disuse. The last *gomana* initiation held officially by the queen in the tribe was in 1892, just before the accession of the present queen. It is difficult to account for this lapse when among neighbouring tribes the cult is still fully carried out. Some say the reason lies in the ritual murders that are associated with the drums, but since it is an accepted principle that a sheep may satisfactorily take the place of a human being and, moreover, this difficulty must somehow have been overcome in other tribes, this reason does not appear good enough. Possibly the cult was introduced from the south and had not become sufficiently assimilated or taken deep enough root to survive the lethargy induced by European contact. Perhaps the rain-making powers of the queen herself made it largely unnecessary. It is not impossible that it will suddenly spring back to life, as did the *vyali* in 1938–9 after a lapse of over thirty years.

Though the queen herself now holds no *gomana*, the institution is not dead. Elements such as *zwidjani* have taken permanent root and the queen has allowed a stranger, Rasekwalo, a rain doctor of the *lwena* totem who came to live on European-owned land under her jurisdiction, to hold a *gomana* with, of course, his own drums, and in 1929, when he came to ask that boys from the royal village should be allowed to attend the initiation, she gave her consent. He holds one *gomana* a year, receiving

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Though made by men or women, there is something almost supernatural about a *gɔma*: its manufacture is called 'giving birth to' (*hu dzwala digɔma*) and though, for example, in the case of a dancing *gɔma*, every one knows that some person is playing the part, this in no way detracts from its importance. Many of the *digɔma* are masked figures in costumes made of grass, reeds, or leaves. Some are mummeries with a meaning attached; others are simply interesting or wonderful objects. One *gɔma*, *dau* (lion), consists of a sound made by passing the hand down a stick on a piece of hide held over a pot. These *digmɔa* are traditional in initiations, but very often new ones are invented and, since different regiments or areas come on many ceremonial occasions with their own *digɔma*, there may be a mild competitive element in the showing of *digɔma*, especially in *khɔba* and *vyali*. Laws taught in initiation ceremonial are also referred to as *digɔma*. But the greatest of all *digɔma* are the *gomana* drums, which are looked upon as gods and are associated with the ancestors and religious ritual. *Digɔma* vary from laws or mummeries to semi-gods. The element of awe, so conspicuously absent in Lovedu religious practices, is found in their attitude towards *digɔma*—not that there is any display of awe towards them or in their presence, but that in referring to some of them people talk as though of something awesome or god-like. Even the *zwidajani*, ancestral spirits, who come to earth when *gomana* drums are played or at religious ceremonies, are thought of as *digɔma*, which in this manner become part of religion itself.

The greatest *gɔma* of the *vyali* is *khiudogani* or *khiudogala*, referred to also as the great Bird of Muhale or of Rhodesia who, like most *digɔma*, is believed to come from a pool in the river. It is a *gɔma* of the men and manifests itself only when there is moonlight, returning, it is said, to its pool when the moon is dark. But it is always there, secreted in its enclosure. The girls have to sing whether it is there or not, and often, though the moon is dark, it whistles its directions and commands. It consists of a light, semicircular framework about 4 ft. high, over which are put strings of the *muga* thorn tree (*Acacia rehmanniana*), which have been placed in water to become black. Surmounting it all is a small head crowned with an ostrich or other feather. It is seen only occasionally, when it comes dancing into the *vyali* courtyard at night, and, in spite of bright moonlight, its black colour makes it difficult to discern it clearly. It speaks and sings by whistling through an instrument similar to, but larger than, that used by *zwidajani*, made of the leg-bone of cattle.

This Bird is the ruling spirit of the *vyali*. It has many praises used by the girls in its honour. Coming as it does when the green foods of summer are being eaten and the grass is long, it is the embodiment of plenty and has daily to receive from each initiate summer foods and beer. All the time it is there every one in the area who makes beer has to bring one calabash to its enclosure. If this is not observed the person may be fined. The Bird regulates the whole procedure of the *vyali*, ordering which songs have to be sung, telling the girls when to dance, when to stop singing, what to do. At times it even gets angry and then, if it is dancing, it may stamp out the courtyard fires. Any infringement of the rules of the school are referred to as 'breaking the ribs' (*hu rɔva letagori*)

3: Krige E-5 (1928-1938)1938 FX14 Lovedu FX14

778 or back of the hut, as among Zulu-Xhosa, but a shrine in the courtyard of the chief hut. Lowveld shrines vary from family to family but are easily recognizable. A shrine may consist of a mound of earth, a stick and river pebble, a spot where a thithikwane lily has been planted or a long stick planted in the earth like the Shangana-Tonga shrine. The contents of these shrines also vary within a general pattern: the Lobedu royal family place the bones of a sacrificial goat or ox in the mound; other families bury two black river pebbles and a piece of a special kind of antheap, and there are many further variations. Always there are, in addition, charms given by the doctor to prevent the ancestors from causing trouble. Instead of a shrine, or even along with it, one may find a beast or goat dedicated to the ancestors, usually bearing the name of one of them, which will at all important offerings be made to drink of the beer given to the spirits.[1] Important national offerings, especially supplications for rain, are made at graves of deceased chiefs or the sacred wood in which chiefs are buried. Great importance is attached to objects, especially old beads, hoes, spears that have once belonged to the ancestors. These are handed down from generation to generation, are placed beside the shrine when an offering is made or may even be used instead of a shrine in a beer offering. Old beads are peculiarly important for ensuring the health of any one wearing them and are used in the curing of many illnesses caused by neglect of ancestors. Sacred drums 778 are to be found in every tribe; these are the *komana* drums, thought ●534 to be inextricably bound up with the welfare of the tribe as a whole. Among the more southerly tribes of the area, these drums are smeared with the first-fruits when the chief eats the first-fruits, beaten on all important occasions such as the harvest offering and pierced on the death of the chief.

782 The officiator in important offerings is generally the father's sister or, if she be dead, the eldest sister in the family; but if she lives too far away the head of the family himself may officiate. In general, the officiator calls on ancestors both on his father's and on his mother's side and there may even be two shrines, side by side, one for the father's line, one for the mother's. There is no evidence of any differentiation between the four lines of grandparents to the exclusion

[1] The Venda pour the beer on the beast.

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i.e., telling the medicine, without any set phraseology, what to do, is important. Day wizards are chiefly men and it is said that, owing to the facility of obtaining bad medicine in towns and from foreign tribes to-day, this type of witchcraft has greatly increased.

In everyday life, however, a person is called a witch, whatever methods he has used, and in an accusation of witchcraft there is never any discussion whether the culprit is a day or night wizard. Moreover, there is in the minds of ordinary people considerable confusion about the type of witchcraft associated with each class, and it is possible to live among Lowveld people a long time without coming upon these distinctions. The night wizard is thus in Evans-Pritchard's terminology the witch, the day wizard the sorcerer; and the great distinction between sorcery and legitimate magic lies not in method but in intention.

SOCIAL IMPORTANCE OF BEER AND THE DANCE. It would be a mistake in discussing the main features of Lowveld society to leave out of count the social importance of beer and the use of the dance or *gosha* as a social institution, though neither is confined to these tribes. Beer, apart from its religious value, plays a part in social and economic life. It is continually being carried from one group to another, acting as a bond between people and establishing friendly relations. In the Lowveld, in contrast to the Highveld, it is still of greater importance than money; while people may refuse to attend working parties for money, they will flock to one where beer is served. The *gosha* is a dance in which women do the drumming while men playing reed pipes dance in a circle round the drums. It is, however, much more than a dance. It is an institution for maintaining friendship and reciprocity between groups, a way of showing sympathy on the death of a relative and the means by which subjects approach their chief for rain in time of drought. A *gosha* is often sent by one chief to another in the Northern Transvaal.

SOME COMPARISONS BETWEEN LOBEDU CULTURE AND THAT OF OTHER AREAS. The Lobedu culture complex represents a close blending of two cultures, that of the Lobedu who came south from somewhere in Rhodesia when the empire of Monomotapa was breaking up, bringing